



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

TO Community Safety - Dec 15, 2009

To: Community Safety Committee
From: Phyllis Carlyle
General Manager,
Law and Community Safety

Date: December 1, 2009
File: 09-5350-00/Vol 01

Re: Police Records Information Management Environment British Columbia
(PRIME-BC)

Staff Recommendation

That a letter be sent to the Solicitor General of British Columbia:

- 1. Requesting that the Province not increase user fees for PRIME-BC and;
2. That elected officials be appointed to the PRIME-BC Board of Directors in proportion to the costs paid by the municipal sector.

[Handwritten signature]

Phyllis Carlyle
General Manager,
Law & Community Safety
(604)276-4104

Att: 1

FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY
ROUTED TO: CONCURRENCE CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
REVIEWED BY TAG YES NO REVIEWED BY CAO YES NO

Origin

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of a recent communication from the Solicitor General, dated September 22, 2009 that advises of a significant increase in the annual fees for the Provincial Records Information Management Environment of British Columbia (PRIME-BC) and to recommend a course of action for Council consideration.

Background

Records management systems (RMS) are essential to the success of police operations. All police agencies record information related to police matters and files in digital format so that the files and other information can be shared and accessed easily within and across police jurisdictions.

In 1998 the BC Association of Chiefs of Police (BCACP) passed a resolution to “Adopt a common police information system in British Columbia which is focused on supporting operational police officers and the delivery of community policing.” At that time there were three RMS used by police agencies across the Province. All RCMP and nine of the twelve independent forces in B.C. were using a system called Police Information Retrieval System (PIRS). The Vancouver Police Department used their own system developed by PRC Systems while Victoria and Esquimalt used a system called the Criminal History Incident Exchange Facility (CHIEFS). All of the systems were somewhat out-of-date and did not communicate with each other. The systems provided only minimal data, were experiencing significant data entry lags, lacked mobile reporting capabilities and were in need of replacement.

The implementation of a regional multi-jurisdictional shared police information system was strongly supported by the Solicitor General. In early 2000, a thirteen member team consisting of representatives from E-Comm, RCMP and independent municipal police forces were engaged in a process to select a new system that would meet the following objectives:

- Assist and support the officer on the street;
- Maximize efficiency by single point data entry;
- Create a business solution with greater search capabilities, is mobile and wireless;
- Integrate to other systems (Crown Counsel, etc.); and
- Upgrade as required to accommodate legislative changes.

The selection committee endorsed the Police Records Information Management Environment of British Columbia (PRIME-BC) solution as it met all of the key objectives.

PRIME-BC provides an entire suite of applications that meet the wide range of modern policing information management needs, including case management, document imaging, scheduling, workflow, and general occurrence reports. It continues to support and facilitate police business practices throughout the Province by reducing duplicate efforts, making information more available to all levels in the organization and can deliver significant cost savings overall. These cost savings can be achieved across the criminal justice system by:

- Real-time data entry – the information is entered at the source and is available to all other users almost immediately with all case information located in a single repository;
- Efficient information retrieval – the system permits efficient access to information thus reducing the time required to locate files and specific information within files; and
- Seamless system integration – PRIME-BC interfaces directly with external systems, such as National databases, and courts to assist in ensuring not only provincial but national security and efficiency.

In 2001, a pilot project was implemented to test the multi-jurisdictional capabilities of the system using three police agencies in the Lower Mainland: the Vancouver and Port Moody Police Departments and the Richmond RCMP Detachment. Several municipal police departments, including all those in the Capital Regional District and various RCMP Detachments began to implement PRIME-BC over the next year.

In 2003, the Solicitor General amended the **Police Act** mandating a single RMS for police forces in British Columbia. PRIME-BC was selected as that single system. Based on that directive, all remaining RCMP Detachments proceeded to convert to PRIME-BC. The Province at the time of the change in legislation had assured local governments that the move to PRIME-BC would be cost neutral. The system is funded on a “per officer annual user fee”.

In January 2007, the per-officer user fee for Richmond moved from \$228 (for PIRS) to \$500 for PRIME-BC. The expectation at the time was that future increases to the user fees would be reflective of Provincial cost of living indices.

Analysis

A chart that outlines the governance structure of PRIME-BC is attached (Attachment 1). PRIMECorp was incorporated in March, 2003 to act as a single point of contact for the governance of PRIME-BC. PRIMECorp is governed by a Board of Directors representing the following areas of interest:

- Director of Police Services;
- C/O RCMP ‘E’ Division;
- C/C CRD Chiefs;
- C/C Vancouver Police;
- C/C Mainland Municipal Chiefs, and
- E-Comm.

It is important to note that there is no municipal representation on the Board of Directors, even though a significant portion of the operating costs for PRIME-BC is funded at the local level.

The 2010 – 2011 Operating Budget for PRIMECorp is approximately \$12 million, of which approximately \$2 million is being funded from Federal sources (not yet confirmed), \$0.74 million from the PRIMECorp Evergreen Program and \$0.22 million allocated from the E-Comm network and helpdesk. In order to fully recover the costs of PRIME-BC, the remaining \$9 million is to be funded through a user fee (cost-per-sworn-officer).

On September 22, 2009, The City has recently received notice that beginning January 2010, the user fee for PRIME-BC will be increasing from \$500 per member, to \$1,000 per member, which is an increase of 100%. The City of Richmond will now pay approximately \$210,000 per year for PRIME, an increase of \$105,000 per year. This increase is equivalent to adding approximately one new member to the Detachment. There are indications that there may be further substantial increases to the user fees for PRIME-BC over the next several years.

As the complexity of policing continues to increase, it is essential that vital information is transmitted quickly within and across police jurisdictions, an outcome which is supported by having a single information tracking system, across the Province such as PRIME-BC. PRIME-BC clearly is needed to effectively investigate and solve crimes and enhance public safety. However, the costs of operating and maintaining this system through user fees is placing an additional financial burden on local governments that are already experiencing significant cost increases in the area of police services. Fee increases in the range of 100% from one year to the next are very difficult to manage, particularly in the current difficult economic conditions and when there is no alternative.

The Cities of Burnaby, Fort St. John, Port Coquitlam, Surrey, and the District of Merritt have also expressed concern and written letters to the Solicitor General requesting further clarification regarding the actual operating costs as well as have made an appeal to move PRIME into an E-Comm 911 governance system which has a board of directors which includes locally elected municipal officials.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact associated with the report.

Conclusion

In 2003, the Solicitor General amended the **Police Act** mandating a single RMS for police forces in British Columbia. PRIME-BC was selected as that single system. PRIME-BC provides an entire suite of applications that meet the wide range of modern policing information management needs. As a result of the conversion, the user fee per member at that time for an information system moved from \$228 to \$500.

The City has been given notice that beginning January 2010, the user fee for PRIME-BC will be increasing from \$500 per member, to \$1,000 per member, which is an increase of 100%. The increase will cost the City an additional \$105,000 per year, which is equivalent to the addition of about one new member to the Detachment. There are also indications that costs for PRIME-BC could further substantially increase over the next several years.

It is recommended that a letter be sent to the Solicitor General of British Columbia urging the Province not to increase user fees for PRIME-BC to allow local governments to direct available police services funding for the purpose of adding police members to its local detachment strength and that the letter include as attachments a copy of this report and the related Council resolution.

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It is also recommended that elected officials be appointed to the PRIME-BC Board of Directors in proportion to the costs paid by the municipal sector.



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Attachment 1:

Overview of PRIME-BC Bodies

